



MOSS POINT Waterfront Study

FOR

CITY OF MOSS POINT, MISSISSIPPI
AND
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION,
BUREAU OF MARINE RESOURCES

JUNE, 1987



NEEL - SCHAFFER, INC.
Engineers · Planners
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

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1987

Mississippi Coastal Zone Management Program



MOSS POINT WATERFRONT STUDY

PREPARED FOR:

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PREPARED BY:

NEEL-SCHAFER, INC.
ENGINEERS - PLANNERS
HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI

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SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This project is made possible by an agreement between the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation, Bureau of Marine Resources and the City of Moss Point, Mississippi. This project was funded in part through a grant from the Office of Coastal Zone Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

The purpose of the project is to develop a plan which when implemented will enhance the public uses, economic development, conservation and preservation of the Moss Point downtown waterfront, adjacent business district and near shore areas. Special consideration will be given to environmental concerns such as wetlands, wildlife and fishery resources.

The funding for this study is the Bureau of Marine Resources' "Urban Waterfront Program". Therefore, the study will promote the following objectives:

1. Establish water-oriented uses and activities.
2. Increase public access to the waterfront.
3. Increase the visual quality of the area and provide a safer environment.
4. Encourage appropriate land and water uses in the area.
5. Encourage the rehabilitation and renovation of old structures as a means of preserving Moss Point's heritage.

6. Encourage concentration of urban development in or adjacent to the urban waterfront for the improved utilization of public facilities and coastal resources, giving full consideration to flooding and other natural hazards.

With this project the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation and the City of Moss Point are demonstrating their recognition of the enormous potential of the coastal waterfront area. Also recognized is the responsibility to insure that these waterfront areas are developed in an effective and efficient manner while providing maximum protection of natural resources.

Neel-Schaffer, Inc., Engineers - Planners, was selected by the City of Moss Point to provide professional and technical services in conducting this Waterfront Study. This project was completed by Neel-Schaffer, Inc. in association with William Garbo, Landscape Architect.

SECTION 2
BASIC STUDIES AND ANALYSES

BASIC STUDIES AND ANALYSES

Background

The City of Moss Point is located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast about 38 miles west of Mobile, Alabama and 100 miles east of New Orleans, Louisiana. The importance of Moss Point's waterfront is clearly demonstrated by the history of the city. The following is an excerpt from a brochure entitled "Moss Point, A Friendly Place" which proclaims Moss Point as "The Historic River City".

"D'Iberville, the French explorer founded his colony in nearby Biloxi in 1699, but it was about a century later before there was any activity around Moss Point. Forests near Moss Point supplied, in turn, the French, Spanish, and British navies with spars for their sailing war ships and armadas.

Jackson County was organized in 1812. The county was named for Andrew Jackson, who had visited the territory. Following the Battle of New Orleans, some of his men settled at Moss Point. Other early settlers from North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia came by the way of Green County to establish thriving sawmill businesses. Shallow-draft schooners loaded lumber for foreign ports in Europe, Mexico, South America, and Cuba.

At one time, Moss Point's post office was designated as Elder's Ferry, but it was "Mossey Point" to logging men and raft riders.

During the Civil War, the sawmills came to a halt, when a column of Union troops marched down the river road and took over the town and the mills.

After the Civil War, the lumber and sawmill business revived, and by the close of the century, Moss Point was a lumber empire. In the late 1890's and early 1900's there were twelve sawmills on the river, and all but three were in Moss Point within a radius of less than one mile.

Moss Point, better known in foreign countries for many years than in the United States, was recognized as the largest pine lumber export center until around 1910.

Moss Point was incorporated in 1901, and was the first and only community in Mississippi to be incorporated as a city before first being a village or a town. By then, Moss Point had a population of about 3,000. The city has shown many population increases and is now at approximately 20,000."

Moss Point obviously has a rich history associated with the waterfront so, its desire is to make the best use of this invaluable natural resource.

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment was conducted to adequately identify all potential development options. This involved interviewing local

businessmen, elected officials, and citizens, establishing an advisory panel, and holding public hearings.

Participation of the advisory panel provided local input to the planning process. The advisory panel was comprised of individuals from the Moss Point Commission on Goals, Historic Society, Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, and other interested citizens and officials.

On November 17, 1987, a meeting of the Advisory Panel was held to obtain input regarding the Moss Point waterfront study. The questions and discussions of the meeting resulted in the following list of development options:

1. Promote new development and control land use along the "New Front Door" (Highway 613).
2. Involve Mississippi Export Railroad and its near shore property.
3. Develop a new marina.
4. Promote new business enterprises such as boutique shops, craft shops, and restaurants.
5. Hold organized boat races.
6. Hold organized fishing rodeos.
7. Promote skiing including an active ski club.
8. Develop new grandstands to observe river activities.
9. Provide parking facilities for all activities.
10. Develop nature areas.
11. Promote downtown celebrations including the annual River Jamboree.

12. Provide for sporting events such as the annual Triathalon.

13. Convert private property along waterfront to public property.

On March 3, 1987, a meeting was held in City Hall to discuss some of the initial findings of the study and to provide for additional input from the Mayor and Board of Aldermen. Some additional comments and questions were given. The following is a list of development options added to those given by the Advisory Panel.

1. Develop facilities for conventions.
2. Develop residential areas for zero lot line and townhouse developments near waterfront.
3. Consider a taxing district for funding improvements.

Comparison of Similar Developments

As part of the basic studies and analyses, other similar developments were visited. The purpose of those visits was to learn from the development strategies of other places. One place visited was a small fishing village of Occoquan on the Occoquan River in Virginia. This village was selected because the development options considered for Moss Point are very similar to those which have been successful in Occoquan. Study team members from the City of Moss Point, Bureau of Marine Resources, and Neel-Schaffer conducted a site visit which obtained useful information about marina development, promoting small shops, and historic preservation.

This trip was combined with meetings with Congressmen and federal agency officials to discuss potential future funding sources. Also other area developments were visited .

Other Study Data

Other study data was collected to assist with the planning effort. These included zoning maps, previous studies and reports, infrastructure layouts, topographic data. Those were used in the analysis of development options.

A base map was developed from aerial photograph on a scale of 1" = 100'.

Primary Study Area

Since Moss Point has a very large waterfront, this study had to be segmented into a primary and secondary study area. The primary study area consist of the waterfront area near the central business district of Moss Point. The secondary area consist of all remaining waterfront. Some of the general recommendations of this study apply to the secondary study area. However, the development options discussed in the study apply to the primary study area.

SECTION 3
SELECTION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

SELECTION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The development options considered in the basic studies and analyses were evaluated based on their conformance with study objectives. They were evaluated with regard to other data collected to result in a final list of development options which are compatible with waterfront development strategies, are generally feasible when existing infrastructure is considered, and promote a positive business/economic climate for the study area.

The selected development options are divided into three categories which are as follows.

Administrative

1. Create waterfront development authority.
2. Control non-conforming development in waterfront area until zoning changes and new regulations are adopted.
3. Make zoning changes to provide for waterfront zoning.
4. Establish site plan and architectural review in waterfront area.
5. Handle waterfront administrative matters by adopting and implementing specific regulations.

New Facilities

1. Marina.
2. Shops and mini malls along Main Street.
3. Island nature area including trails observatories and wildlife preserves.
4. Riverside aquatheater.
5. Riverside picnic area.
6. Riverside mini park.
7. Outdoor fitness court.
8. Restaurant at marina.
9. Zero lot line and townhouse residential development.
10. Resort meeting and lodging development.
11. Festival market.

Infrastructure Improvements to Accommodate Development Options

1. Parking.
2. Utility improvements.
3. Main street widening, other roadway, and traffic improvements.
4. Landscaping.
5. Pedestrian ways.
6. Signs and promotions to provide waterfront area continuity.

SECTION 4
GENERAL DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF SELECTED OPTIONS

This Section provides further explanation of the development options. This study is limited to a general discussion and does not address design details, cost estimates or funding feasibility. The general information given in this Section will be used as the basis for future detailed studies for implementation of various elements of the Moss Point waterfront development. Schematics of the development options are shown on the base map. Those schematics should not be considered as design layouts but can be used as the basis for development of detailed design drawings in the future development stages.

Administrative

Development of a waterfront area has inherent situations that require specialized administrative capabilities to insure that development occurs in a proper manner. To provide some development continuity, an agency should be created to oversee all waterfront development. The City of Moss Point should give this agency authority to handle administrative matters by adopting and implementing specific regulations. Those regulations should be written using other adopted standards as a guide and with appropriate professional assistance.

To further assure that new development complies with overall waterfront development strategies, site plan and architectural review should be established. This will involve technical review of building types, development plans, and building renovations.

Zoning changes should be made to develop new zoning that complies with development strategies. Also, a new zoning category should be established for special designation of the waterfront area. Other cities have developed similar zoning categories. Standard zoning regulations should be researched and adopted for this waterfront zoning.

A critical situation presently exists since the regulations, authorities, and policies mentioned above have not yet been established. While research, adoption and implementation of new administrative procedures are underway, the City should adopt interim policies that control non-conforming development in waterfront areas. Strict adherence to these policies should be enforced since correction in later development stages will be costly.

New Facilities

The marina is without question the primary new facility. Many of the new facilities selected as development options support the marina. However, this is not to say that the individual development options are not viable without the marina. The overall waterfront development will be made up of many individual elements which complement each other, but individually are feasible projects.

The marina will consist of two basins. The west basin will primarily serve pleasure crafts and the east basin will primarily serve commercial boats. Support facilities for the marina will

include two boat ramps, breakwaters, fuel dock, boat sales and repair yard, trailer and automobile parking and a harbor master building.

It is anticipated that Main Street will be widened through the Moss Point Central Business District soon. One plan calls for widening to the east side of the present roadway. This will require demolition of some existing buildings. This means that new buildings will probably be constructed. These buildings should conform to development strategies. Openings between buildings should be provided for traffic circulation. The nature of the waterfront development will provide a good opportunity for mini-mall type shops along Main Street. The buildings for these shops should be designed with open spaces, pedestrian walkways, and landscaping. The designs should provide for maximizing security features and attractive appearances.

Existing islands in the waterfront area provide excellent locations for nature areas and wildlife preserves. Even though these islands are accessible by boat only, docks and walkways should be provided for visitors. Nature trails should be designed with walkways and observatories.

The riverside aquatheater will provide grandstands for observing sporting events and water shows. The aquatheater should be designed for floating performance platforms to be docked during performances.

The areas adjacent to the waterfront should be designed with picnic areas, mini parks, and an outdoor fitness court. These improvements will provide for diversified use of the waterfront area for purposes other than water activities. At least one restaurant should be located at the marina.

Detailed development plans should provide for zero lot line and townhouse development in the waterfront area. These developments will strengthen the economic climate of the waterfront area by providing attractive waterfront housing for potential newcomers to the Moss Point area.

A complex should be provided to accommodate small conventions and meetings. This facility should provide meeting rooms, lodging, dining, and recreational facilities for guests. The facility may be privately owned and operated but will be an integral part of the waterfront development.

A festival market will provide space for crafts show displays and exhibits that will accompany special events on the waterfront.

Infrastructure Improvements to Accommodate Development Options

The existing infrastructure appears adequate for the waterfront area as it exists today. However, as development occurs, improvements will be required. New parking facilities will be required for the new marina and other facilities. More detail analysis of parking to determine location and number of spaces will be required. Also, utilities will be extended and upgraded to provide adequate fire protection, wastewater collection, water, gas, electric and telephone service.

As previously mentioned, Main Street widening is proposed. This widening should be designed to provide a good appearance while adequately handling traffic flows. This can be accomplished by providing a median with landscaping to "break up" the wide section of asphalt street. Other roadway and traffic circulation improvements should be made as required to handle traffic flow in the waterfront area.

Since much of the circulation in the waterfront area will involve pedestrians; sidewalks, walkways, and trails should be provided. These pedestrian ways should be designed to afford enjoyable views of waterfront development while providing access to all key elements of the development.

Signs and promotional materials should establish continuity for the waterfront area.

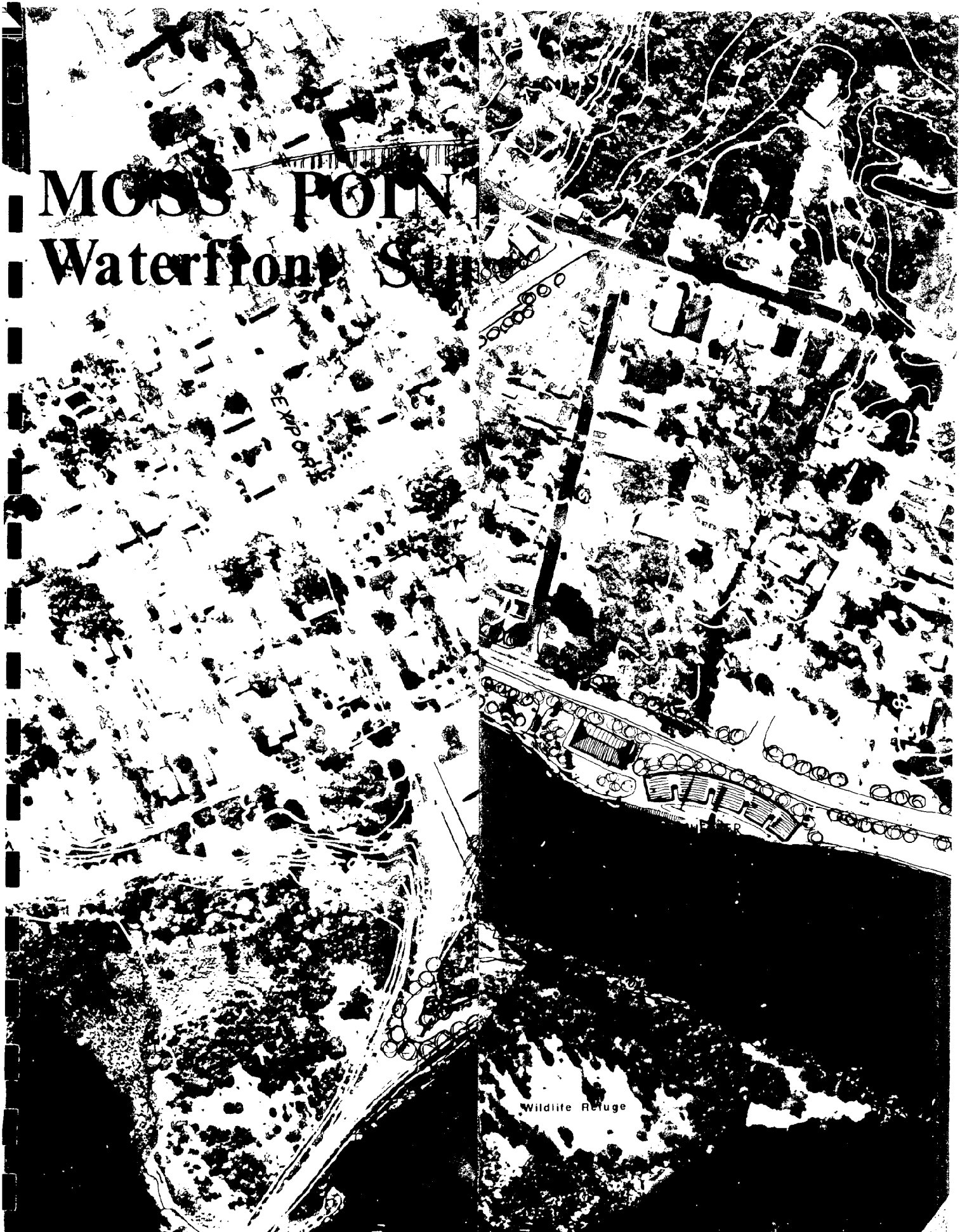
Summary

These development options, when implemented, will satisfy the needs for the primary study area identified in the basic studies and analyses. The City should move forward in implementing these strategies. Also, additional study should be devoted to the secondary study area.

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1 - DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS BASE MAP

MOSS POINT Waterfront Strip







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